The University of Oklahoma

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

September 8, 2006

Oranna Bumgarner Felter
P.O. Box 465
Fort Duchesne, Utah 84026

Dear Oranna,

I am please to write a letter of support for your efforts to restore, through litigation or legislation, the sovereign rights of the American Indian people your organization represents. The sad truth of the matter is that the people of Utah are misinformed about what happened to the 490 members of the Uinta Ute Band. They know nothing about the illegal and heavy-handed tactics of a United States Senator, Arthur V. Watkins, and his supporting cast of attorneys, including Ernest L. Wilkinson and John S. Boyden, which resulted in termination of federal trust status for these people. They are ignorant, finally and most importantly, of the sad tale of poverty, discrimination, and disinheritance that has followed the members of this group since passage of the Ute Partition Act.

As I have scrolled through the letters posted on your website, I am dismayed to see the ignorance and indifference displayed by public officials and leaders of churches and private institutions. How perfectly ironic that the president of the Mormon Church – an institution that had much to do with the injustices committed against your people – is "unable to give an opinion" on this matter. And how appalling that the letter from Utah Senator Robert F. Bennett continues to perpetuate the myth that the Ute Tribe somehow *legally* defined its own membership in excluding your people – a position that overlooks the historic fact that the Ute Tribe *did not* conduct a lawful vote to exclude the Mixed-blood members in the first place.

My constant hope is that a more enlightened group of public and private leaders will take the time to learn what really happened during that fateful year of 1954, and how passage of a very bad piece of legislation, P.L. 671, the Ute Partition Act, perpetuated a crime against the Uinta Ute people – the original treaty band of Ute Indians in Utah. There is still time to rectify these grave errors, and I wish you the very best in your efforts to find and educate those with the power to do so.

With warmest regards,

Warren Metcalf
Associate Professor of History
University of Oklahoma

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